

EXTRA

Crazy Ladies at a Bargain

S TILL CRAZY (AND FAT) After All These Years: When not haunting local bijous, your economy-minded Phantom likes to spend his spare moments rummaging through various bargain-vid outlets in search of unexpected treasures. It was in one such establishment



that we recently came across the legendary **Crazy Fat Ethel II** (1987), auteur Nick Philips' seriously belated (by 13 years!) sequel to his bizarre, no-budget psychoromp **Criminally Insane**, wherein obese actress Priscilla Alden first introduced her gorging Crazy Fat Ethel character.

Crazy Fat Ethel II shamelessly recycles the "good parts" from the 16mm **Criminally Insane** within a new shot-on-video wrap-around updating Ethel's stuff 'n' snuff-oriented life.

The result is a technically shoddy but utterly compelling chronicle, perhaps the best bottom-of-the-trash-barrel slice-and-splice pastiche to surface since Ed Wood Jr.'s immortal cut-and-paste transvestite saga **Glen or Glenda?**

With its almost frighteningly *vérité* look and alarmingly low level of alpha-wave activity, **Crazy Fat Ethel II** plays like a homemade hybrid of the horror and documentary genres. The pic sees a long-institutionalized Ethel, sort of a Lizzie Borden on Thorazine, released to a halfway house—a move dictated by drastic state budget cuts.

THE HALFWAY HOUSE IS operated by elderly Hope Bartholomew (Jane Lambert), whose oft-repeated motto is "Let's never give up hope." Our hefty heroine, older but no wiser, nor any less compulsive when it comes to food (as it does here with numbing regularity), experi-



HARD-CORE GORE: Priscilla Alden's wild-women vids at econo prices.

ences numerous violent flashbacks from **Criminally Insane** while leisurely embarking on a new slaughter spree. As Hope puts it, "Ethel refused to take her medicine, and there was a terrible scene."

TERRIBLE SCENES abound in this demented exercise, but there's no denying that Priscilla Alden has star power to spare. Whether viewed wreaking vengeance on all who would stand between her and her food supply, or simply glaring at an imagined enemy, Priscilla's largely negative charisma dominates every scene. Wise indeed would be the network TV exec who recognized **Crazy Fat Ethel's** prime-time sitcom possibilities. (Well, maybe not.)

In any case, **CFE II** is available via both Video Treasures (\$9.95) and (in a higher-quality version) Video City (\$29.95, 1-800-847-8400). The latter outfit also stocks Priscilla's **Death Nurse** (\$29.95)—which, hard-core Ethel enthusiasts insist, is even better than **CFE II**. For the Phantom's moolah, **Crazy Fat Ethel II** represents an hour and sawbuck well spent.



Coming Detractions: And speaking of quality thespis, Linda Blair is set to topline in a pair of upcoming pix, the tongue-twisting **W.B., Blue and the Beaner** and the more succinctly monickered **Bad Blood**, with Troy Donahue (the two last joined forces in the fun atrocity **Grotesque**). Troy also will be appearing in **John Travis: Solar Survivor** and, opposite the incomparable Edy Williams, in the low-budget comedy **Nudity Required**.

Fright Faves: Anthony Perkins plays Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in **Edge of Sanity**, while Robert (Freddy) Englund takes the title role in Cannon's **Phantom of the Opera** remake, and Donald Pleasance co-stars with Italo actress Daria Nicolodi in the musically inclined **Paganini Horror**. Watch for 'em!

Wish I'd Said That

Detective, after learning that a suspect is a deaf-mute, in the 1941 serial **The Iron Claw**: "Then why didn't he say so!"

An official Phantom T-shirt goes to Ira Shprintzen of Yonkers for sending along that backdate *bon mot*.